



DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR'S APPROACH TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar the principal architect of the Indian constitution and as an emancipator of the poor and deprived. He was not only crusader against the caste system and a valiant fighter for the cause of the down trodden but also an elder statesman and a National Leader. Dr. Babasaheb was the beacon of light for the millions of depressed, oppressed and exploited people of India.

Dr. Babasaheb's mission in his life was to challenge the ideological foundation of graded system of caste hierarchy that denied equality, freedom and human dignity to woman in Hindu Society, but his down documents as the living documents i.e. Indian constitution brings the equality by the rule of law in this nation. The paper gives closer and analytical insights into the thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb so as to appreciate his ideological basis of political, economic and social justice towards empowerment of the women in Indian Society.

KEY WORDS: Social justice, Hindu Social order, Women problems, Mahad Satyagraha, Hindi code Bill, Manu Smriti and Indian Constitution.

Introduction:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a saviour of the suppressed classes, a noted jurist, The chief architect of Indian constitution a profound scholar, a daring leader, overall a multifaceted personality an intellectual revolutionary, a ray of hope for the downtrodden and underprivileged section of Indian society but also worked tirelessly throughout his life to challenge the legitimacy of orthodox Hindu social order that upheld iniquitous gender relations in an institutionalized manner. (Barnwal-2014)

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was observed in several roles as a noted scholar, teacher, lawyer, parliamentarian, administrator, journalist publicist, negotiator agitations leader and devote (MoonVasant-1991). Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar acquired deep knowledge in every field of human activity to become a founder of his own independent ideology. He was trained as a social scientist, social progress and social stability depended on equity. According to Dr. Babasaheb no caste, no inequality and no superiority all are equal that is what stood for. (M. Sampathkumar 2015)

Literature survey reveals that from ancient time women in our land were not given proper treatment. Her societal positioning was never at par with men. She was not given even the basic rights. They were even equated to animals and put to the lowest rug of humanity. (S. Mohammad Azaal- 2013).

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar fought for tooth and nail for woman's economics liberation and for securing woman's social rights, He stressed the need to safeguard the dignity and to respect the modesty of the women folk. (S. Mohammad Azaal-2013). He studied extensively the Hindu Shastras and Smritis to find out the root cause of degraded status of women in India. (Godbole-2015).

He started his movements in 1920 raised his voice against the Hindu social order and social system through renowned journal Mook Nayak in (1920) and Bahishkrit Bharat in 1927. The content of all issues used to be on gender equality, women education and exposed the problems related to women and other depressed class. He strongly advocates for family planning measures for women in Bombay Legislative Assembly (Satyajit Das-2015) 6. And equal opportunity and equal share with their male counterpart in Indian Society.

Objectives, Method and Materials:

The present paper is an attempt to highlight the analysis made by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on gender relation which were artificially constructed under Hindu Social order and women problems in pre and post independent India and the relevancy of his modern democratic ideas in present and social scenario of India. The secondary data collected is the outcome of literature survey and material obtained from Internet, published papers, books, proceedings and speeches delivered by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in parliament, various conferences and meetings in pre and post independent India.

Analysis and Discussion:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's approach to women's empowerment was entirely different from other social reformers like Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Rajaram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Mahatma Gandhi who tried to reform the Hindu Society of certain outdated customs and practices without questioning the hierarchical social order. He believed that society should be based on reason and

not on atrocious tradition of caste system therefore, in order to reconstruct Hindu Society along modern democratic ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. (Bijay Barnawal-2014) and his mission was to challenge the ideological foundations of graded system of caste hierarchy that denied equality, freedom and human dignity to women in Hindu Society. (Mahindra Godbole). He suggested in "The Annihilation of Caste System", that Hindu mind should be purged from the thralldom of the shastras.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's perception on Women's problem emphasized on women's right to education right to property, involvement in the political process, gender equality which resembled with the global feminist demand (Sanjeev Kumar-2015). He started his movement in 1920 and believed in the strength of women and their role in the process of Social reform and progress of the society which can be achieved by accelerating male educations persuaded side by side with female education. To strengthen his movement and to raise the voice for liberation of women and promoting the need for women's education he started his owned newspaper MookNayak in 1920 and Bahishkrit Bharat 1927) to upgrade the social status and to motivate women to participate in social reform movements against social evils and demanded for their socio-economic rights as the societal positioning of the women were not par with men and were deprived from the basic rights, and were equated to animals and put to the lowest rug of humanity (S Mohammad-2013)

Dr Babasaheb was a great believer of women's organization and in their strength of improving the condition of the society and in his movement of 1920 as women actively participated and started acquiring confidence to voice their issue on various platforms by participating in satyagrahas and setting up women's association for untouchable women to spread education and awareness (Vijay More-2011) In 1927 after getting nominated as a member of Bombay Legislative Council Dr. Babasaheb urged the need to recognize the dignity of women and supported maternity benefit bill for women labourers. His stand and argument was "It is in the interest of the nation that the mother ought to get certain amount of rest during the pre-natal period and also subsequently and the principle of the bill is based entirely on that principle, "That being so sir, I am bound to admit that the burden of this ought to be largely borne by the Government, I am prepared to admit this fact because of the conservation of the people's welfare is the primary concern of the Government, And in every country, you will find that the Government has been subjected to a certain amount of charge with regards to maternity benefit (Kavita kait 2013)

In the same year in March 1927, Dr. Babasaheb launched Mahad Satyagrahas in this historic march thousands of Men/Women were accompanied to assert their rights to take water from Chawdar tank at Mahad. The movement was to liberate society from out worn traditions and evil customs imposed ruthlessly and upheld religiously by a vast society upto its weaker and helpless constituent and to restore human rights and dignity to them (Bharati 1992)

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar made a bonfire of Manusmriti in presence of more than fifty women in the conference of depressed classes held at Mahad on 25th December 1927. At the end of the conference he addressed about three thousand women in a meeting which was first of its kind in modern India and urged them to dress well and live a clean life, do not feed spouse and sons if they are drunk, send your children to schools. Education is necessary for females as it is for males

(Singariya M.R 2014)

The women's association was established in January 1928 and Ramabai, Dr. Babasaheb wife as its president. Along with the depressed classes conference in Nagpur in 1930 women also had their separate conference. (Vijay More-2011) In the Kalaram temple entry satyagrahas at Nasik in 1930, five hundred women participated and many of them were arrested along with men and ill treated in jails. The encouragement of Babasaheb to empower women to speak boldly was seen when Radhabai Vadale addressed a press conference in 1931. She said "It is been to die a hundred times than live a life full of humiliation. We will sacrifice our lives but we will win our rights. The credit for this self-respect and firm determinations of women goes to Dr. Babasaheb. (Singariya-2014)

Dr Babasaheb believed in the strength of women and their roles in the process of social reforms. The historic Mahad satyagrahas witnessed participation of three hundred women along with their male counterparts. Addressing another meeting of about 3000 women, Dr. Babasaheb said, I measure the progress of community by the degree of progress which women had achieved. Let every girl who marries stand by her husband, claim to be her husband's friend and equal and refuse to be his slave. I am sure if you follow this advice you will bring honor and glory to yourselves. The credit for inculcation self-respect and firm determination in women goes to Dr. Babasaheb (Vaisali Dhanvijay-2012) He strongly advocated for family planning measures for women in Bombay Legislative Assembly. In 1942 being a labor minister of executive council of Governor General introduced a maternity benefit bills and provided several provisions in the constitution for projecting the welfare and civil rights of the women.

The presence of 25,000 women in All Indian Dalit Mahila Conference on 20th July 1942 pleased Dr. Babasaheb with their awaking and activities. Gaining inspiration from Dr. Babasaheb many women wrote on various topics like planning Buddhist philosophy, plays, and autobiographies also participated in satyagrahas. Tulsabai Bansode started a newspaper this was the awareness created among poor, illiterate women and inspired them to fight against the unjust social practices like child marriages and devdasi system. (V.More-2011).

Dr. Babasaheb spent his life into for the betterment of women even involved in bad practices and professionals like prostitutions. The greatest example of it was seen in Kamathipura a David, mediator working in brothel left profession persuaded by the thoughts and teaching of Dr. Babasaheb and looked the entire prostitute to give up their profession and lead the life of honor. (Sanjeev Kumar-2015) while addressing in conference to women Dr. Babasaheb could easily communicate with them as a homely person and conversion. He evoked of women in the following words, "Never wear such clothes which will degrade our personality and character. Avoid wearing the jewellery on your body everywhere. It is not fare to make hole on nose and wear 'nath'. In this he condemned all the bad traditions, habits and ways of life which made life difficult and complex. And to the surprise, even the illiterate women followed this advice from the bottom of their heart.

Dr. Babasaheb emphasis was on reconstruction of the Hindu Society on the basis of equality rather than the social reforms initiated or Arya Samaj because their attempt were limited only to the upper strata of the society. His indepth study of Smritis and shastras and his experience from the response of upper castes during the temple entry movement crystallized his conclusion on Hindu philosophy and society.

In manu Smriti, manu not only shows contempt for women but goes on to degrade them as slaves devoid of intellect: denies them the right of education and right to property: and forbids them from performing sacrifices. (Jitendra Shinde.2012) protecting the welfare and civil rights of women and introduced Hindi code Bill in the parliament and highlighted the issues about women's property right. About Muslim women Purdah (veil) system, religious conversions and legal rights for Muslim women. In short, along with the depressed class women, his thoughts for emancipation of all the women are expressed with same allegiance ulary and constitution of India, being India's first law minister and chairman of drafting committee of the constituent assembly, Dr. Babasaheb thought it appropriates rather his duty to free women from the age old thralldom by reforming the social laws created by manu. He therefore took initiative to draft and introduce the Hindu code bill in the constituent Assembly. (Sanjeev Kumar-2015 and GodDr. Babasaheb tried an adequate inclusion of women's right in the political vocab Dr. Babasaheb provided several provisions in the constitutions forbole Mahendra Tukaram 2015).

To secure this goal, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar has given equal status to women on par with men by providing many provisions in the Indian constitution. To him, sexual discrimination should be root out from the society and everybody should get equal opportunity in the society. (Ahir, D.C 1990)

The Preamble of Indian constitution guarantees social and economic justice to women and that is because of Ambedkar contribution. In the preamble it is mentioned:

- i) Social, economic and political justice,

- ii) Freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship,

- iii) Equality of status and opportunity and

- iv) Fraternity assuring dignity of the individual and national unity to all the citizens of India without any discrimination of caste, creed or sex.

In Indian Constitution, there are few articles exist that help the women of Indian society to improve their position and to compete with their male counterparts. For example

Article 14 – All are equal in the eyes of law and equally protected by the law. It means equal rights and opportunities in political, economic and social spheres.

Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex.

Article 15(3) enables positive discrimination in favour of women.

Article 16 mentions there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office without any discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, creed and sex.

Article 24 prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in factories, mines or in any other hazardous employment.

Article 39 and 39(d) state Equal means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work.

As per article 41 the state shall guarantee within its economic limits to all the citizens, the right to work, to education and public assistance in certain cases.

Article 42 the state makes provision for Human conditions of work and maternity relief.

Under article 44, the state provides a uniform Civil Code to all the citizens throughout the territory of India.

Article 46 – The state to promote with special care, the educational and economic interests of weaker section of people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Article 47 – The state to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health and so on.

Article 51 (A) (C) – Fundamental duties to renounce practices, derogatory to the dignity of women.

Article 243D (3), 243T (3) & 243R (4) provides for allocation of seats in the Panchayati Raj System.

Ambedkar not only ascertain constitutional guarantees to women but also introduced and got passed four Acts which strengthened the position of women in the society.

These were incorporated in the Hindu Code Bill.

These are:

- i) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

- ii) The Hindu Succession Act, 1956.

- iii) The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956.

- iv) The Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956.

If we look at the provisions of those Acts, we can easily make out that Ambedkar was a great thinker of women rights and emancipation. Provisions that have been enshrined in the Acts are as follows:

The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 was amended in 1976 made the following provisions for women:

1. The legitimization of illegitimate children (Sec.16).
2. Punishment-bigamy (Sec.26).
3. Custody of children (Sec. 26).
4. Marriageable age of females raised to 18 years.
5. Provision for alimony (Sec. 25). The Act abolishes the difference between a maiden and a widow.

The Hindu Succession Act, 1956

This Act contains the following provisions for women:

1. A widow has a right to adopt a son or a daughter which was not there in the Hindu Law.
2. It also provided an opportunity to be independent and dispose of her property by will as she wishes and desires (Sec. 14).
3. A uniform scheme of succession to the property of a Hindu female, who dies, intestate after commencement of the Act, was made in Section 15. Previously under the uncodified law the succession to stridhan varied according to the marital status of a woman.

The Hindu Succession and Guardianship Act, 1956:

Following provisions are come under the purview of this Act:

1. The mother is empowered to change the guardian, appointed by the father and may appoint a new guardian by will.
2. The father's right to appoint a guardian for the minor by will during the life time of the minor's mother is prohibited under this Act.

The Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956:

This Act has the following provisions:

1. This Act accepts adoption of a male and a female child without any difference, whereas under the uncodified law a daughter could not be adopted.
2. This Act permits a wife to adopt a child on her own right even during her husband's life time. She had no such right prior to this enactment.
3. In the uncodified law a spinster or a widow had no right to adopt whereas this Act grants them the right to adopt.
4. Under the old Hindu Law a wife need not be consulted while adopting a child or while giving a child for adoption, whereas this Act made it essential to consult her in both the cases.
5. Section 11 lays down that, a father should adopt a daughter at least 21 years younger to him. Sanjeev Kumar-2015, More, Vijay-2011, Kavita Kait-2013)

Conclusion:

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar was a path-maker of all the women irrespective of religion, caste, creed, gender and brought a new trend for uprising the women through his thoughts and beliefs. Along with women all the people of India should be proud for the tremendous and everlasting steps for the empowerment of women in Indian society carried by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. He also talked about the Muslim women about wearing veil, their religious traditions and marriages and fought against all kinds of discrimination against women throughout his whole life. But still discrimination against women in Indian society is overlooked. So it is a duty of every Indian to fulfill the dreams of Ambedkar for a better life world of women. It may also be mentioned here that the term, "Social Justice" will not be exercised properly if the people of India should not be able to change their attitudes specially towards women, SCs, STs and other weaker section of the society.

In the era of globalization many Multi National Companies (MNC) are searching for merit for the smooth running of the functions of their companies. In that context, to prevail social justice in the society, the companies should work within the constitutional framework and the concerned state government or central government should make rules, regulation for the engagement and involvement of people from different categories so as to ensure social justice. So that society would be based on equality and equal opportunity and the dreams of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar would be fulfilled. Keeping in mind the importance of Ambedkar's views towards Indian society, the then prime minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said, "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a symbol of revolt against all oppressive features of Hindu society".

In present scenario the Indian women have progressed a lot in various parts of their life although they are still suffering from various social evils like dowry, eve teasing, rape etc. It is a fact that in the glorious development of Indian society, the Indian women have march forward to the developmental process and somewhere treated equally with their male counterparts but it is yet to be realized by the people of India that women should have given the equal rights and opportunity with men so as to establish a shining India where women can live freely and equally irrespective of religion, caste, creed, gender etc.

I would like to conclude here by quoting Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's slogan on Unity, Education and Agitation. "Unity is meaningless without the accompaniment of women. Education is fruit-less without educated women, and Agitation is incomplete without the strength of women".

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